

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 290350Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4777

S E C R E T BANGKOK 9745

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, TH

SUBJ: ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING ANTI-VIETNAMESE RIOTS IN NORTHEAST  
THAILAND

1. "THE NATION" OF MAY 24 QUOTES DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER BUNLOET LOETPRICHA AS SAYING THAT CIA OPERATIVES ENGINEERED THE RECENT ANTI-VIETNAMESE RIOTS IN NONG KHAI AND SAKON NAKHON PROVINCES. BUNLOET ALLEGED THAT SEVEN OF ABOUT 20 THAI RIOTERS ARRESTED IN NONG KHAI MAY 18 WERE POSITIVELY FOUND TO BE WORKING FOR THE CIA. BUNLOET SAID THE CIA WAS APPARENTLY TRYING TO SABATOGE THAILAND'S EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND SOUTH VIETNAM. THE EMBASSY ISSUED A DENIAL OF THESE ALLEGATIONS. DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER ANAN CHAISAENG NEVERTHELESS REPEATED THE ALLEGATIONS MAY 27.

2. WHILE CIA HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ANTI-VIETNAMESE RIOTS, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THEY WERE NOT ENTIRELY LOCAL AND SPONTANEOUS. GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, CHIEF OF STAFF OF SUPREME COMMAND, SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF THE RIOTS IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE POLITICAL/MILITARY COUNSELOR MAY 26 AND SAID HE EXPECTED THEM TO CONTINUE. WE ALSO KNOW THAT LT. GEN. CHAMNIAN PHONGPAIROCHANA, COMMANDANT OF THE ARMED FORCES INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS CENTER WHICH IS SUBORDINATE TO SUPREME COMMAND WAS IN NONG KHAI MAY 22. PRACHA KUNAKASEM, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INDICATED TO THE POLITICAL/MILITARY COUNSELOR MAY 21 HIS SUSPICION THAT EITHER

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KRIANGSAK OR GENERAL SAIYUT KOETPHON, COMMANDER OF THE

INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC), MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE RIOTS. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, PRACHA ALSO SPECULATED THAT THE DRV MIGHT AT LEAST THEORETICALLY WANT TO PROVOKE SUCH INCIDENTS IF IT WERE LOOKING FOR A PRETEXT FOR ATTACKING THAILAND. ISOC OFFICERS DISCLAIM ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RIOTS AND POINT THE FINGER AT THE DRV AND LEFTIST POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN THAILAND.

3. COMMENT: OUR INFORMATION ON THE ANTI-VIETNAMESE RIOTS IS STILL TOO TENUOUS TO DRAW ANY DEFINITE CONCLUSIONS AS TO WHO IS SPONSORING THEM. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED, HOWEVER, IF SOME ELEMENTS OF THE THAI MILITARY WERE ENCOURAGING THEM IN ORDER TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT AND UNDERMINE ITS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH NORTH VIETNAM. MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT SUCH AS BUNLOET AND ANAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO SHIFT THE BLAME TO THE U.S. IN ORDER TO PREVENT AN OBSTRUCTION TO THE TALKS WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE DELEGATION NOW TAKING PLACE IN BANGKOK.

WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ESTABLISHMENT, ALLEGATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 29 MAY 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** X4  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 24 JUL 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <24 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING ANTI-VIETNAMESE RIOTS IN NORTHEAST THAILAND  
**TAGS:** PINS, PFOR, TH, VS, US, CIA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006